

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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REPS. MARKEY, SHAYS QUESTION POWELL ON EVIDENCE OF IRANIAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS CAPABILITIES

Washington, DC - Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA), co-chair of the Congressional Task Force on Non-proliferation, and Rep. Christopher Shays (R-CT), Co-Chair of the Bipartisan Task Force on Non-proliferation and Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Government Reform, today sent a letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell requesting the Administration provide more information to Congress about Iran's nuclear program, the Administration's assessment of the European-Iranian agreement, and requesting the Administration cooperate with international inspectors to receive full access to suspected Iranian nuclear sites.

"The credibility of the United States suffered when we missed the mark so badly in Iraq," said Markey. "But the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) also missed the buildup of Iran's clandestine program. Both the U.S. and the IAEA are trying to divine the plans of a regime through fragmentary pieces of information gleaned from a variety of sources, much of it subject to widely varying interpretation and credibility. We simply cannot afford to be wrong two times in a row on a subject as serious as the spread of nuclear weapons," Rep. Markey said.

"It seems to me the agreement between Iran and Europe is a very helpful starting point. The United States, however, must play a role in strengthening this accord. In the meantime, it would be extremely beneficial for Congress to have the Administration's most honest assessment of the agreement, of Iran's threat level and what this Administration's policy will be moving forward."

In the letter, Rep. Markey and Rep. Shays asked the following of Secretary Powell:

- Provide Congress and the American people with its best estimate and assessment of the current status of Iranian efforts to acquire nuclear explosives and their delivery vehicles,
- Provide Congress and the American people with its assessment of the extent to which the agreement recently reached between Iran, Great Britain, France, and Germany, could effectively limit further efforts by Tehran to acquire nuclear explosives;
- Provide Congress and the American people with an evaluation of the basis for and credibility of claims recently set forth by an Iranian resistance group that Iran may be enriching uranium at a secret facility unknown to U.N. weapons inspectors;
- Provide U.N. and IAEA weapons inspectors with full access to the intelligence that forms the basis for any conclusion that Iran is actively pursuing a nuclear weapons program;
- Ensure that the U.N. and IAEA inspectors receive full access to all suspected Iranian nuclear sites; and

- Ensure the U.S. works together with the international community to ensure that Iran provides such inspectors with full cooperation in their efforts to verify that Iran has complied with its obligation under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the agreement recently reached with the three European Powers.

Rep. Markey is the author and Rep. Shays is a cosponsor of H. Res. 259 calling for robust inspections of nuclear facilities in Iran by urging the Islamic Republic of Iran to accept an additional, safeguard-strengthening agreement that gives the International Atomic Energy Agency unfettered access to assure against the presence of undeclared facilities or the diversion of materials or technologies from safeguarded facilities.

A copy of the letter and of H. Res. 259 are available at www.house.gov/markey.

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